The Catalyst

The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks

Autumn 1997 **Volume 2 No. 4**

I Am the Naturalist

By Ginger Murphy
Salmonie Lake, Indiana

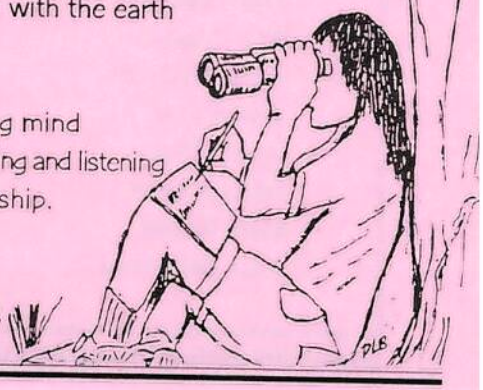
I am "the naturalist."
I am a weaver
who spins the earth
into the fabric of people's lives.
I am a magician
who surprises my audience
with things they've never seen.
I am a scientist
who cherishes facts and logic,
but I am also
A poet and storyteller
who binds facts
with feelings and imagination
to touch and change
ways of thinking.
I am a teacher
who challenges,
"How?" and "Why?"
I am a watcher
of wild things and people
And a listener
to their reactions
to the world around them.
I am an optimist
who believes in the good
in each child and each adult.
I am a steward
jealously guarding
the planet in my care.

I am "the naturalist."
And I get really tired.
Tired of never being alone in the woods.
Tired of taking the initiative.
Tired of smiling.
Tired of answering the same questions every day.

I want to lay down in a field
and watch the clouds go by,
But I know
that people would find me there.

I know that each visitor is but one,
In one summer
In one year of my life.
But I also believe that one
deserves all my skills
and all my commitment.
Because that one
will change the world someday.
And I want that change
to come from a foundation of
connections with the earth
magic
science
a questioning mind
patient watching and listening
and stewardship.

I might be the key.
Today might be the day.



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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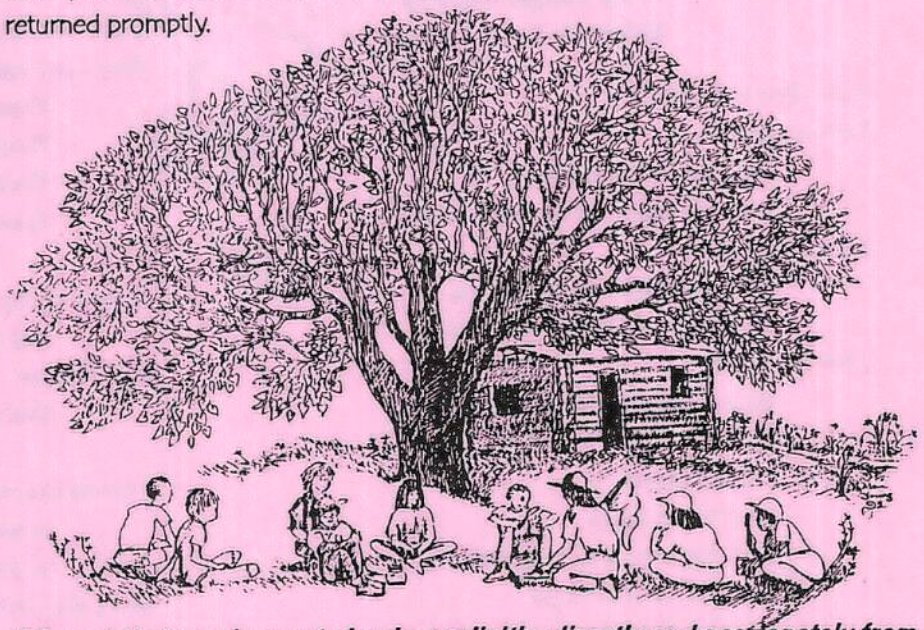
Contributor's Guidelines

Catalyst welcomes your original articles of any length! Or, send copies of stories published elsewhere that you think our readers will appreciate. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time.

We really appreciate articles submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most formats of DOS/Windows disks. Printed manuscripts, facsimile or phone messages are also accepted. Please advise if you would like your diskette returned, otherwise we will recycle it in our office to save postage.

Illustrations are strongly encouraged. Drawings, graphs or other illustrations may be submitted on disk or hard copy. Black & white glossy photos are preferred; color prints or slides sometimes work. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly.



"the art that speaks most clearly, explicitly, directly and passionately from its place of origin will remain the longest understood."
— Eudora Welty

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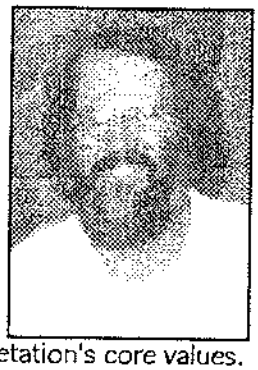
From the Editor



Another summer has passed. For many of us that brings a change of pace, a chance to recover and get recharged for next summer. Put your feet up and check out this issue of *Catalyst*. Hopefully it has what it takes to get you started "recharging." We've searched far and wide to find stories that vividly reflect interpretation's core values. The poem on the cover is probably a good place to start. It sums up nicely what it is we do and just why it is so important. It was written by Ginger Murphy who is an Interpretive Specialist at Salmonie Lake in Indiana. It first appeared in *Four*Thought, the NAI Region 4 newsletter. You can contact Ginger at (219) 468-2127.

You'll find another favorite on page 6, "Are There Lions In This Park" written by Brian Brus. He is a reporter-editor for the *Daily Oklahoman* in Oklahoma City. Brian is doing a series of columns on volunteer opportunities in that area. Thanks to Connect Oklahoma Inc. for permission to reprint it.

Also, preliminary statewide interpretive attendance numbers are in and they are quite impressive.

You'll find a few new ideas for "Interpreters in the Off Season" on page 8. Chris Judson of Bandelier NM offers some ideas to stretch your mind. Chris can be reached at Chris_Judson@nps.gov. This story also appeared in *Mooselips*, the NAI Region 7 newsletter.

I think you'll enjoy the story on page 9, "My First Time, Television." Written by Lise Schools of Interpretive Ideas in Bloomington Indiana, it also appeared in *Four*Thought, the NAI Region 4 newsletter. Lise can be reached at (812) 335-8612.

Frank Gunnip of Woldumar Nature Center in Lansing Michigan brings us "Some Simple Reminders" on page 10. This story also appeared in *Four*Thought, the NAI Region 4 newsletter. Frank can be reached at (517) 484-7285.

Linda McDonald has recently joined the Interpretation Section in Headquarters to coordinate accessibility and quality evaluation of interpretive programs and to develop a model teachers' guide for preparing individual unit teachers' guides. Her story, "Miracle Workers" on page 11, will update you on what's happening. Linda can be reached at (916) 653-0768.

If school groups are starting to head for your unit again you'll want to review the techniques on page 12. Joanie Cahill runs the Visitor center at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. She would enjoy hearing from you at jscahill@pacbell.net.

Wil Jorae is a student assistant involved in researching park history, cataloguing photos of the parks, and scanning the images into the image database. If you scan photos you will be interested in his work; see page 14. Wil can be reached at (916) 324-6952.

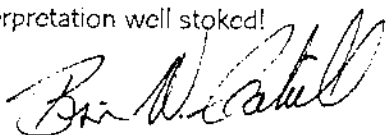
Jim Newland, Historian at the Southern Service Center, reviews an article on interpreting historical wages and prices on page 16. Also, Sharon Mallory, Exhibit Specialist at Monterey District shares some information on exhibit cases on page 17.

Get the Sesquicentennial spirit with a "Mother Lode of Gold Rush Literature" on page 18. Pat Morris, a Museum Tech with Park Services, alerts us to some wonderful stories. Pat can be reached at (916) 653-8767.

And, as usual, we bring another installment of the 150 Exchange and the Tapestry. Whew!

Thanks to each of you who take the time to read the *Catalyst*. We know there is more in your in-box than you can possibly read. Be sure to let us know what you think. We really appreciate your comments and suggestions.

As the days grow shorter, be sure to keep the fire of interpretation well stoked!



Brian Cahill, Editor

What's Up?

Interpreters' Resources

National Interpreters Workshop

Join a thousand of the nation's finest interpreters in Beaumont, Texas, November 8-12, 1997. This workshop will give you new ideas for your programs and staff and let you meet hundreds of other people (who do what you do), allowing networking, sharing and learning. Several DPR folks will be there; how about you? For info call NAI at (888)900-8283.

Geological Society

The Geological Society of America and its SAGE (Science Awareness through Geoscience Education) Program, invite Park interpreters to participate in its Annual Meeting and Exposition in Salt Lake City, UT October 18-23, 1997. See http://www.geosociety.org/meetings/97/sage.htm for details. The meeting promises to give you everything you need to know about the latest in earth science research: From energy to environment, earthquakes to engineering, mountains to Moho.

Watchable Wildlife Conference

The Seventh Annual Watchable Wildlife Conference will be held October 13-16, 1998 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This conference will bring together people from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the business community. For information contact Jill Simmons at jill_simmons@mail.fws.gov; or call (505) 248-6635 or fax (505) 248-6874.

Birding Brings Big Bucks

What is your park doing for birdwatchers? According to a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey, birdwatching is the fastest growing form of recreation in the country. Not only that, birding is good for the economy. In 1991, Americans spent $18.1 BILLION in birdseed, equipment, and travel-related goods and services.

Evaluating Volunteers, Programs and Events

This new book leads you through the step-by-step process of evaluating programs, efforts, people and partnerships. Help make evaluation a key management component and a critical measure of progress toward your expectations. Cost $8.00, from the Volunteer Marketplace Catalog. (800)272-8306.

Seen Any Deformed Frogs Lately?

Reports of deformed frogs, toads and salamanders have increased recently. Government researchers are gathering reports of deformed amphibians. Theories range from pesticides to parasites to ozone depletion. Scientists won't know how serious this is until a cause is found. You can contact them at http://www.npsc.nbs.gov/narcam or call (800)238-9801.

Wayside Exhibits

The NPS wayside exhibit web page is packed with information. If you're considering waysides, check it out at www.nps.gov/waysite

Skulls Unlimited

Prepared animal skulls can be a great interpretive tool. If you don't want to go through the hassle of cleaning and preparing your own, or if you need that hard-to-find skull to round out your collection, we've got a catalog for you! Call Skulls Unlimited at (800)659-SKUL.

The Great Aluminum Can Roundup

The North American Association for Environmental Educators and the Can Manufacturers Institute have developed a resource kit on recycling and other environmental aspects of aluminum cans and the can-making process. Geared to 4th graders (or Jr. Rangers), it is absolutely free. Call (800)462-0003.

Keep America Beautiful

Planning a cleanup? Coloring books, brochures and trash bags are available from the Keep America Beautiful Specialty Products Office. For information, samples and a price list call (518)842-4388 or FAX (800)995-5121.

Backyard Stewardship

New materials are being offered by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Backyard stewardship focuses on the importance of individual action in our own backyards. A sample education kit is available for $4.50 including educator's guide and activity guides along with a poster, bookmark and placemat. Call (800)825-5547.

Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

I'd like to do a slide program on Native Americans. Is it OK to use a speech by Chief Seattle or do I have to stick with our local tribe?

Bewildered

Dear Bewildered,

Whoa! Be careful here. Its always best to dig up your own local material if you can. Never make generalizations about Indians! That particular speech you mention is especially tricky. The version most widely quoted was actually written by TV producer Ted Perry as a free translation of the original text. Yet, it is often quoted as authentic. Such "pop" presentations are considered exploitative. If you decide Chief Seattle's speech is appropriate to your program, then do careful research. The version closest to the original was transcribed by Dr. Harry J. Smith in 1887. Accept no substitute!

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

On a recent interpretive program evaluation I got dinged for not mentioning the park name (even though I'm sure I did). What's the big deal?

Unhappy

Dear Unhappy,

Did you perhaps welcome folks to Pine Cone Point without mentioning that it is a State Park? That's not a trivial point. So-called "brand identity" is more important than ever before. If people don't know who we are, we may not survive. Take a look at the nightly news, for example. Even excluding the little peacock in the lower right hand corner of the screen, the show is packed with spoken references to NBC and graphics of the NBC logo ... 61 times in one recent half-hour program! We can *all* do better at letting folks know who we are and why state parks are important.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

Why can't we get more interpreters in the field? Some of the ones we have don't even do any interpretation. When will things change?

Just Wondering

Dear Wondering,

Now just a doggone minute! Just what do you mean by doing interpretation? Some interpreters present programs for visitors. Others, however, do interpretive planning or design interpretive publications and exhibits. Interpretive training, coaching and interpretive program administration often round out the mix. All of this is important to achieving our goals.

But "more interpreters"? I know interpretation but I don't know much about the budget. I ***can*** tell which way the wind blows and I'm not expecting a lot more help anytime soon. So I'm looking for ways to work smarter and giving better interpretive training to my seasonals and volunteers.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

Our Co-op just produced a nice videotape. We plan to put in a little cabinet in our visitor center that will hold the TV and VCR. They are looking at buying inexpensive "Goldstar" equipment, while I was hoping for something more durable. Can you offer any advice?

Wary

Dear Wary,

Even if you buy very high quality consumer equipment it is simply not built to stand up to the heavy use encountered in most visitor centers. If you plan to show your program two or three times a week you might get by OK. However if you plan to show it every day, over and over, you are looking at a major headache (jammed tapes, worn-out heads, constant maintenance and lots of "out of order" signs).

For reliable, heavy duty continuous use you need to get that program on a disc. Laserdisc or the newer DVD is really the only way to go. It will cost a bit to get your disc mastered but in the long run it will save you both money and aggravation.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

Would you believe a visitor to Grand Canyon actually asked the ranger "Why did the Indians only build ruins?" You know, some questions have no answers!

Incredulous

Are There Lions in This Park?

By Brian Brus
Editor, The Daily Oklahoman

So there I was, stranded in the middle of the dark forest, surrounded by vicious critters and left with nowhere to run as they slowly closed for the kill...

"Brian, are there lions in this park?" a Coolidge Elementary School first-grader asked.

I should be so lucky, I thought. Lions are far less threatening - at least they don't ask questions I can't answer.

It was my first tour as a volunteer guide at Martin Park Nature Center, and I was trying to pretend I knew what I was doing. Kids can smell fear, you know. Then they'll eat you alive. Any park ranger knows that.

"Be calm," head park naturalist Neil Garrison had told me just an hour earlier. "No one expects you to be a walking encyclopedia."

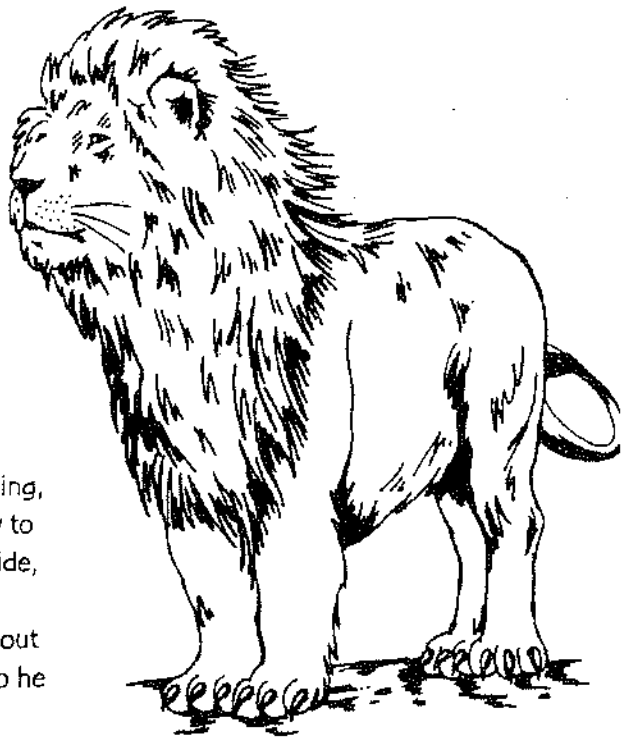
So I smiled bravely and explained to the students that lions wouldn't like Oklahoma's wacky weather. And besides that, a lion would eat more zebras than the park could support. The kids appreciated the zebra-eating part.

As the beasties chewed on that thought, I breathed a sigh of relief.

But just a few steps farther down the path, an adult chaperone stopped me dead in my tracks when she said, "Let's ask the expert..."

Me? A genuine expert?! It's a heady responsibility, the education of young minds. I knew that whatever I uttered that morning could screw up those kids' love of nature for the rest of their lives.

Fortunately, Garrison was an excellent teacher. During my training, he offered all sorts of tips on how to survive in the woods as a tour guide, and I used them all. The man has worked in the park for years, without any noticeable scars or injuries, so he must know what he's doing.



Kids can smell fear, you know. Then they'll eat you alive. Any park ranger knows that.

A guide's main goal is to help the public enjoy the 140-acre park. That's the easy part — the park is beautiful and serene, with three walking paths. And for some odd reason, a walk through the wild kingdom is even more invigorating when you realize that it's right on the edge of what we call "civilization."

The secondary goal is to transform that fun into a learning experience that people will remember. "Hopefully, they'll be able to use some of what they've learned when they go home," Garrison said.

A tour guide's most important lesson is this: wear a khaki shirt. This isn't something Garrison said, but it was pretty obvious to me. Regardless of your education or political leanings, a tan shirt automatically makes you look like you've been on safari and that you know what you're doing.

Second lesson: Ignore the turtles in the information center. They'll only make you remember all the turtles you had as a child, and the horrible fates they met, and then you'll start to think, "I've been so cruel to nature. What the heck am I doing here? I'm such a hypocrite!"

Not so. As long as you like people and / or the great outdoors, you can help the park.

Third lesson: "Don't be afraid to

be corny. Kids love corny," Garrison told me.

No problem! I could do corny. Most of my life is pretty corny. And that tip worked amazingly well as I convinced the kids that termites actually are our friends. (Trust me on this one; it's way too corny to repeat here.)

One of their last questions involved bears. A little more difficult than lions, but I was armed with a double-barrel of "biodiversity" and "ecological niches."

I never had to fire off my explanation, though, because someone spotted a squirrel. All attention turned to the tree rat and I was granted a reprieve.

Hypothetical lions and bears mean nothing when you've got a real, live squirrel burying a nut just three feet away.

Yeah, I was a nature expert. It wasn't so hard after all, I realized. And next time, I'd study for all those questions I couldn't answer. I could really enjoy this.

Garrison said I interacted with the kids well, — probably because I've never quite grown up myself, my wife tells me. And we had "facilitated appreciation and enjoyment of the park," Garrison said. A job well done.

So did I want to lead the next group, he asked?

No way. Fifteen-year-olds scare me.

Interpretive Programs Reach 10 Million!

The Statewide Interpretive Summary numbers are in for the 1996-97 fiscal year. Virtually every category shows an increase over 1995-96. The number of programs presented is up 11%; staff hours of presentation, up 2% (with volunteers again counting for more than half of all hours); total attendance at all of our interpretive offerings, up 10%; and total hours of public education provided, up 4 %. Both total attendance and total hours of public education exceeded ten million!

A detailed statistical analysis of the data will be sent to district interpretive coordinators.

Coming in the 1997 - 1998 School Year

School Group Evaluations

The field test of the school group evaluation forms has been completed. This is for the Performance Base Budget measure that looks into our program's "Degree of congruity with education curricula for educational experience for K-12 children." Full implementation will start this fall. Based on evaluation criteria from the State's Social Science and Science Frameworks, a form for teachers to fill out after a school group program will be distributed throughout the state.

The evaluation asks teachers to give a letter grade to five aspects of the program: Educational Content; Presentation to the Student; Usefulness to Students; Using Current Educational Pedagogy; and Teacher Usability of Materials and Presentations. The evaluation also covers general issues such as pre-trip information, logistical arrangements, accommodations and safety. By spring of 1998 we should be able to assign an average grade to our programs in these areas. More importantly, the procedure will give us indicators of where we need improvements and how we may make them.

Thirty percent of the evaluations were returned in the test, and judging from the results of these 27 "report cards," our grades should be very high when we conduct the statewide survey. The average score was from 3.4 to 3.8 for the five major areas. In other words, most of the grades given were As. In addition, most of the evaluations included very positive written comments about park programs and the people who gave them. We had a feeling we were doing good work. Soon we may have the grades, from teachers no less, to prove it.

"Deep" Interpretation

Interpreters in the Off-Season

Chris Judson
Bandelier National Monument

What do interpreters do in the winter? Those of us working in mainly-summer-crowds-type parks spend the summer charging full speed ahead, so the winter is a time to recharge. That is, finally take a breath, slow down, open those eyes, and look around at things besides those necessary for day-to-day survival, or perhaps at different aspects of things that **are** familiar. That last part, trying to think unfamiliar thoughts about things we think we know well, is something I've had a few inspirations about over the last few months, and hope to think more about this winter.

To myself, I tend to call one angle of this kind of thought "deep interpretation," to echo "deep ecology." Deep because what I'm trying to do is look at things the way they are, rather than how we have taught ourselves (and others) to describe, classify, and identify, them. Huh??? Well, think of the last time you felt like you'd really gotten acquainted with a landscape just because you'd taken a photo of it, or felt like you knew all about a flower just because you'd found out its name.

Or, use stars as examples. We tend to think that if we can point out and name a fair number of constellations in the night sky, we know something about the stars. Actually, that may just blunt our perception and understanding of what those shiny things up there are. Tonight, go out, stare at the sky, and try ***not*** to see constellations. After all, most of them are, really, accidental patterns composed of stars that have no actual relation to each other, but just *appear* to from our viewpoint. Try to think of each star individually, the wonder of all the particulars of the existence of each one, and the wonder of how far it may be between one star and the one that appears to be next to it (stars that seem to make up a constellation may actually be so far apart that if one went super-nova, observers on a "neighbor" wouldn't know about it for decades or even centuries). And then, consider that some objects that we tend to think of as stars are actually entire galaxies.

Another example? Try to think of a bat, not as hanging upside down, but as hanging just right for him/her. In fact, since bats appear in the fossil record so much farther back than humans do, consider that it makes more sense to say that we are upside down, Or maybe call it ears down or ears up? Just thinking about the question at all may lead to a different perspective of ourselves and other equally-carbon-based life forms.

And another? "Ranger, what's your snake's name?" I've gotten far enough with this process that I don't call her by a name, because I don't know what she considers to be her name. I've been trying to really know that she's not my pet, she's my guest for the summer (I snakesit for a local school). I know I would hate to be called by some name that somebody just made up for me. (This will probably feel familiar to all of us trying to re-think the term "Anasazi"!)

> ***Trying to think unfamiliar thoughts about things we think we know well makes my mind and understanding feel like they're stretching in all directions***

More? How about re-considering the common practice of "interpretively" finding pictures in clouds, or giving cave formations names like "The Elephant" or "The Elves' Parade." I mean, think how amazing the cloud itself is — all that water hanging around up in thin air, where it has come from and where it is going. And ponder on how that limestone went through life as the shell of a sea creature, drifted to the bottom, became stone, and then dissolved and precipitated. This kind of thinking always makes my mind and understanding feel like they're stretching in all directions.

Well, I'm afraid that none of this will help you put together that new slide show you'd planned to do this winter, or get better trained volunteers at the visitor center desk. But maybe it'll provide a little refreshment to your love for interpretation and the things/concepts you interpret.

An Interpreter Remembers

My First Time: Television

Lise Schools,
***Interpretive Ideas*, Bloomington, IN**

Public speaking is never easy. There is, however, consolation in the smiles and nods from a sympathetic audience. Not so with pre-taped television programs. No chuckles or looks of wonder here.

For those who have not interpreted in front of a television camera, try speaking effusively to your toaster or other kitchen appliance. You get the same amount of feedback.

So it was with fear and trepidation that I approached my first Indiana State Parks television program. The show appeared weekly and consisted of three natural history topics. This came to 156 topics a year. Not wanting to replicate topics, this meant that an interpreter spoke for 20 minutes on the minutiae of the natural world. For some, this was easy. Who has not seen Tim Cordell speak for 20 minutes on the white-lipped land snail without feeling reverence and humility?

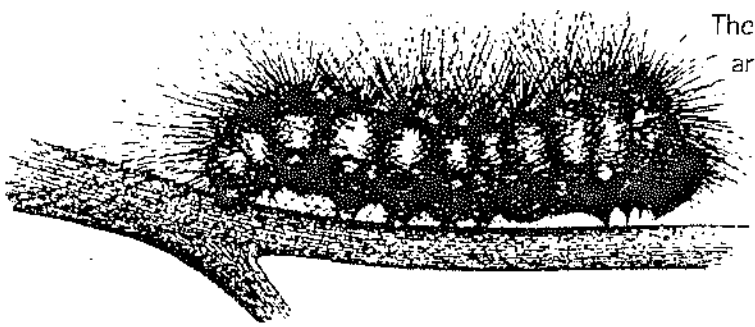
For me, coming up with topics was difficult. With the show being taped in October, we finally settled on woolly bears. I would have slides of the Isabella moth, charts of the woolly bear's life cycle, and of course, a live woolly bear. In October, woolly bears are seen crossing country roads by the thousands.

Then it happened. "Due to a schedule change, your taping date has been moved up six weeks." I was now taping in early September.

I rushed over. Prayer, pleading, and an attempt at CPR failed. The woolly bear was quite dead.

Woolly bears aren't seen in early September in southern Indiana. I put out an all points bulletin for woolly bears. My last day off before taping was spent driving every road in the county looking for just one woolly bear. Nothing.

On the day before taping, a miracle happened. Seasonal naturalist Cathy Meyer rushed in the nature center office. Clutched in her hand was the fuzzy brown, and black star of the show. She'd found it in the nature center parking lot. We fixed deluxe accommodations for the little guy. Water, food ... he had it made.



The next morning I arrived early to gather my program materials before heading to Indianapolis for the taping. Much to my horror, from the jar I heard the dying gasps of a caterpillar. I rushed over. Prayer, pleading, and an attempt at CPR failed. The woolly bear was quite dead.

I can do this!" I convinced myself.

"Five, four, three, two, one ... roll 'em!" The red light on the camera popped on as my heart pounded.

"Woolly bears are the most interesting animals," I chirped. For the next 20 minutes, I explained their hibernation, myths, range, the two broods. In my hand lay the corpse of a woolly bear. Periodically, I would see the camera lens zoom up on the beast. By giving my fingers a little tremor, the woolly bear would move about in a spunky fashion. I had to be careful. Too much motion, and the little guy might catapult out of my hand, adding new dimension to woolly bear folklore. "...and thank you for watching, Indiana Outdoors." I did it. With a flick of the finger, the Woolly Bear landed on the grass, to become one with the biosphere.

I've given many presentations since then, on a wide range of topics. My confidence has grown with the years. In large part, my confidence comes from knowing that "If I can talk on television for 20 minutes about a dead caterpillar, I can talk about anything."

Some Simple Reminders for All Interpreters

Naturalist's Reflections

by Frank Gunnip,
Woldumar Nature Center

As a naturalist, I often feel confronted with several dilemmas. These include maintaining "control" of my presentation and audience, keeping them focused, encouraging a manageable degree of inquisitiveness and having enough "materials" to share. In reality, presentations and audiences have a momentum of their own, keeping my audience focused is a little like yawning (if I get a few people focused, it spreads to the rest of the group), curiosity is an unmanageable variable and I rarely run out of material!

While watching students engrossed in observing their own mini-aquatic worlds in a kidney pan, I often remark to a teacher, "Sometimes, we just need to get out of their way." A fellow naturalist once said that when he leads marsh walks he never stands between his audience and the marsh. I don't mean to minimize interpretation, which can enhance the experience, but who can speak better for the marsh than the marsh itself?

As I prepare for field trips, I remind myself that seldom is information more important than experiences. Experiences are the foundations that a teacher can build upon back in the classroom. There have been many occasions when I wish I had had more experiences and less information. How many times do we ask children for their questions and get stories instead?

My next guideline is as close as I can come to originality: When I talk to students who are not listening, those students will not listen when I talk to them. I hate to admit the number of times I have gotten so wrapped up in what I had to say that I forgot to see if I still had an audience. A raised hand, standing in silence or some other quiet signal will let my audience know that I need their attention.

I have discovered that I can get students' attention more easily if my eyes are on the same level as theirs. When I remove some of my grown-up-ness by kneeling down or sitting, a certain physical and chronological distance seems lessened. Circles are also helpful and lend themselves to working with audiences rather than rows or bunches of people.

I have also discovered that when I give an audience power (sometimes they just take it) they respond in wondrous ways. I can give them power without losing all of mine by letting them know that they have much to teach me or that I have never heard their question before. As a field trip ends, I begin a sharing circle with, "What have you learned today that you didn't know yesterday?" I have even startled a third grade class by telling them something that *a first grader* taught me last week.

Lastly, I face the dilemma of overpreparing. When I find myself wondering whether I have enough information (as if that will insure a good presentation), I remember an admonition of Anatole France: "Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire."

When I get into trouble with any of these dilemmas, it is usually because I am trying to be a presenter rather than a facilitator. I remind myself that empowering visitors to want to learn is more productive and easier than teaching. It is a fine distinction, but one that allows me more flexibility and enjoyment than I ever imagined.

While killing time before a classroom presentation, I came across this proverb on a hallway bulletin board: "What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand." If only I had seen that 20 years ago! That proverb has haunted me during my own programs and while watching others.

Like so many tidbits of wisdom, these guidelines are easier said than done. For me, they serve as ways to stay focused, to be flexible, to take some pressure off, to know that I don't have to know or do it all, and to let my audience know that we are partners on a journey of discovery.

I hope this audience finds "some good inflammable stuff" here.

Implementing the ADA

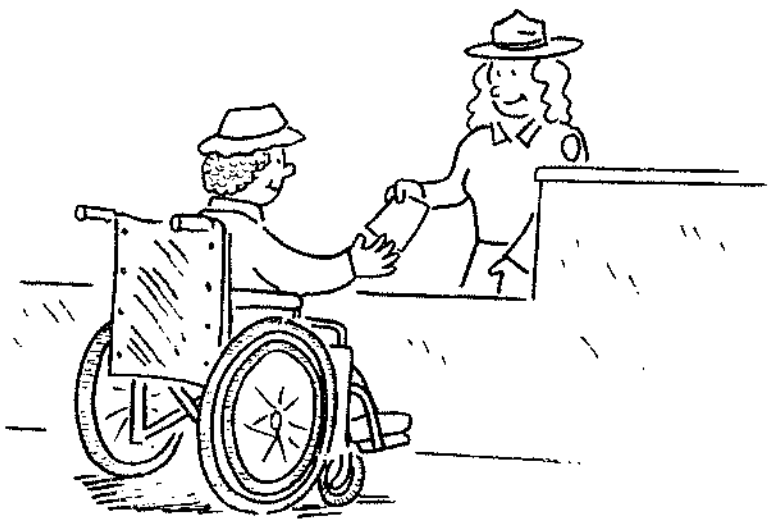
Miracle Workers

By Linda McDonald
Park Services, Interpretation

Recall the image of Helen Keller's teacher wrestling with her — hands working feverishly — spelling the word "water" into Helen's tiny palm while pumping water over their hands. That's the moment when the teacher broke through Helen's world of silence and darkness. Helen's dramatic discovery that the hand movements represented the substance —water— led her to a fulfilling life of communication and growth.

In grasping the challenge of implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act as it relates to interpretive programs, I remembered this scene from the play "The Miracle Worker." Aren't we all like that teacher? — interpreters who see and hear the wondrous messages of our natural world and our rich human culture? And aren't we all seeking to awaken others to those wonders? To communicate messages through a dramatic discovery?

Helen's revelation took place in 1887. Over a century later in 1990 the struggle for the civil rights of people like Helen took the forefront as the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. Our challenge today is not just to meet the requirements of the law, but to pursue greater accessibility with enthusiasm. Let's begin to envision state-of-the-art accessible interpretation in each unit of California State Parks. Wouldn't you feel like a miracle worker if the programs you are responsible for were accessible to all visitors by the year 2000?



Contemplate your greatest tool — the park itself. Explore your park unit(s) with all your senses. Put yourself in the place of a visitor with minimal or no hearing, minimal or no sight or limited mobility. From that perspective, how could you best appreciate your park and its interpretive programs and/or facilities?

Many tools are available to assist you in meeting the accessibility challenge. Our department publications *All Visitors Welcome* and *Access to Parks Guidelines* offer all the information you need. *All Visitors Welcome*, published in 1994, provides detailed information about a variety of disabilities and how to make your programs accessible to people with those disabilities. In addition, the book includes a helpful listing of agencies, product suppliers and other references.

Access to Parks Guidelines was first published in 1993, though the sections on interpretation were added in January of this year. The shorter, supplemental survey documents that include interpretation were made available late this summer.

You may be wondering what will be expected of you in terms of conducting surveys of the interpretive programs in your unit or district. The timeline for completion is still in the planning phase.

In the upcoming months, I plan to field test the interpretation surveys, which cover the following areas of interpretation: exhibits, guided programs and tours, information stations, publications and audio-visual programs. If you are interested in working with me to field test the accessibility surveys for interpretation in your district, please call me at (916) 653-0768, Calnet 453-0768.

I welcome your input regarding the implementation of ADA in interpretive programs. You can look forward to future training sessions that include demonstrations of assistive listening systems, large print publications, sign language interpretation, and Braille exhibit labels. Together we can meet the challenge of providing accessible interpretive programs and working miracles for visitors of California State Parks.

The time to plan is now

Back to School Groups

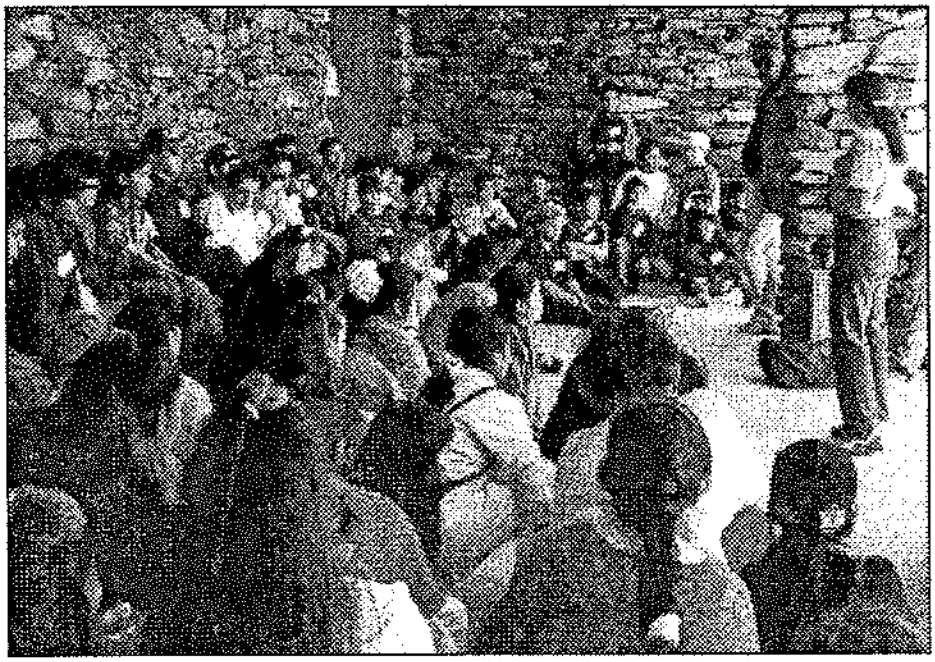
By Joanie S. Cahill
Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Summer is over and kids are "back to school." That means rangers will soon be back to school group programs and the time to plan is now.

Wouldn't it be great if every school child came to your park excited about the environment, ready to learn, well-fed, well-rested, well-loved, dressed appropriately, proficient in the same languages that you speak, and arriving in groups of fifteen or fewer? It's a wonderful dream, but the reality is that kids and their needs are just as diverse as the wildlife in your park. Becoming an outstanding school group interpreter is a consistent life-long challenge that has incredible rewards but incredibly tough moments as well.

By presenting a program that is dynamic, active, fun and inspirational while secretly imparting the educational information you'd like them to retain, you can overcome many of the obstacles kids bring with them to the park. Planning a program that keeps students too busy and too focused to even ***think*** about misbehaving should certainly be one of your goals. Consider your audience in advance, as a program suitable for sixth-graders may bore first-graders to tears. The tears by the way, will be yours as well, because bored children mean trouble for your program.

The tears by the way, will be yours as well, because bored children mean trouble for your program.



Planning a program that keeps students too busy and too focused to even think about misbehaving should certainly be one of your goals.

In real life, the sun doesn't always shine, and we all have good days and bad, kids and interpreters alike. Don't worry if you have a bad program once in a while. Learn from it and move on. When your best provocative, thematic, interactive plans are just not enough to carry you through the day, here are some techniques that might help.

Before the Program:

✓ Think about who your audience will be. How old are they? Any special needs?

✓ Know your theme, your trail, your props.

✓ Have all your props, games, experiments and activities ready, plus a few extra.

Beginning the Program:

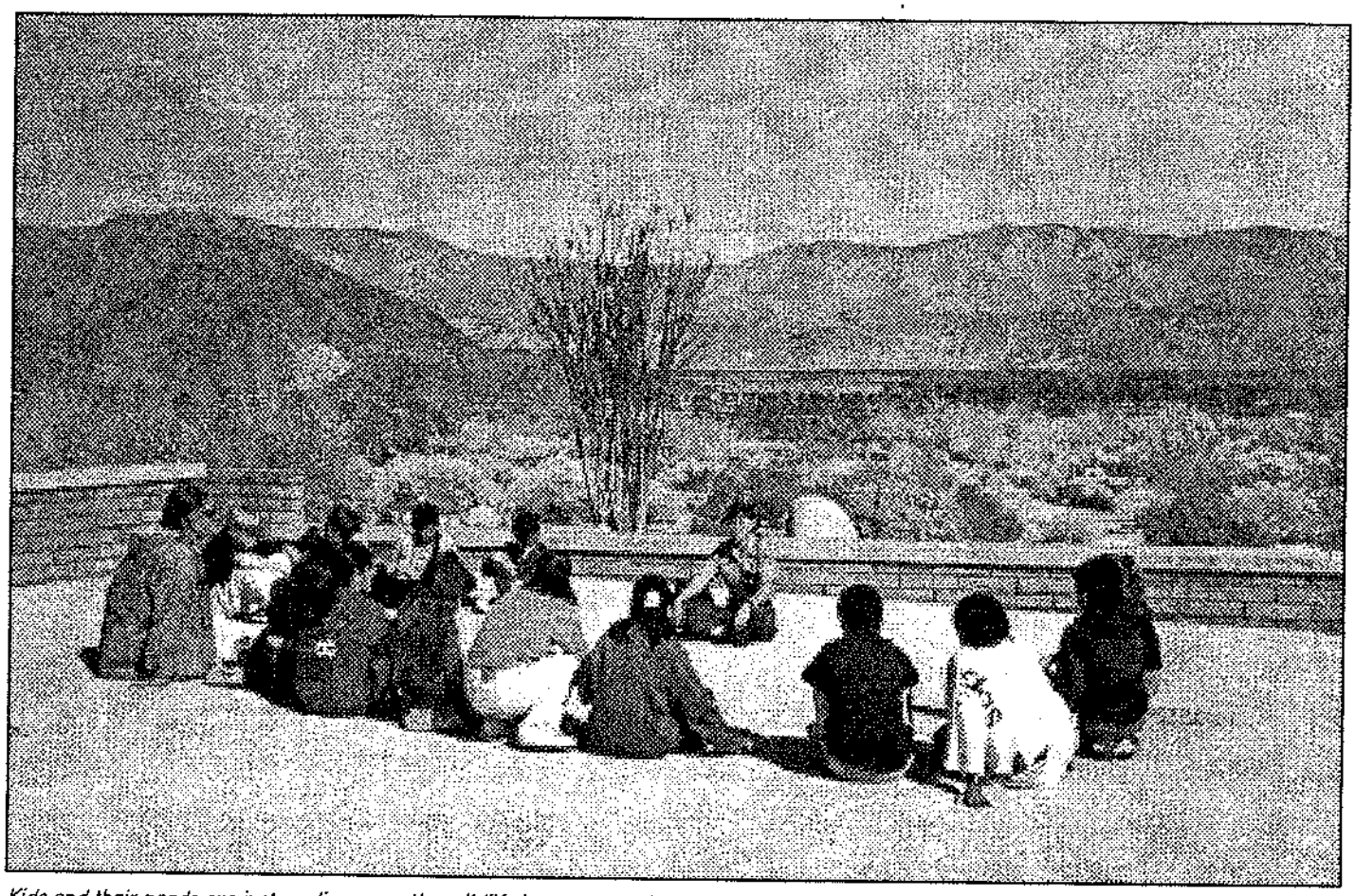
✓ Watch the group arrive. Are they calm, wild? Is the teacher in control? Use this information to plan your introduction and refine your plan for the program.

✓ Make sure everyone has visited the bathroom and drinking fountain.

✓ Have the group sit somewhere during your introduction.

✓ Introduce yourself and theme, what you're going to do and how long it will last.

✓ State the rules and expectations that you have from them. (... I expect



Kids and their needs are just as diverse as the wildlife in your park. Becoming an outstanding school group interpreter is a consistent life-long challenge that has incredible rewards but incredibly tough moments as well.

you to listen while I'm talking and I'll do the same for you. Raise your hand if you have something to say.)

✓ If the group is wild or loud or generally out of control, stress your rules and explain consequences. (... If someone is not able to stay with the group, he/she will have to walk separately with a parent.) Follow through if necessary.

✓ State what you expect from the teacher and parents. (... Parents, your job today is to keep the group together and make sure no one wanders away.)

During the Program:

✓ Find out what they know and build on it.

✓ Keep it moving. Keep them busy. No one wants to hear you lecture.

✓ Ask lots of questions and ask them from lots of different children. Wait a few seconds after asking so that you'll have more ready responses.

✓ Help them use all their senses.

✓ Listen to them.

✓ Enlist their assistance whenever possible, such as carrying things, holding things up, etc.

✓ Praise the good behavior, ignore the rest if possible.

✓ Facilitate independent or small group activities.

✓ Show them that you like and respect them.

Concluding Your Program

✓ Evaluate what they've learned through a game or through questions.

✓ Restate your theme during the conclusion of your talk.

✓ Let them know that you appreciated their good behavior, keen observations, etc.

✓ Ask them how they can continue to learn more about this after they leave the park.

After the Program

✓ Identify one thing that you did really well.

✓ Identify one thing that you want to work on before the next program.

✓ Record your stats before you forget them!

Digitizing the Photo Archives

Capturing Rogue Images

by Wil Jorae
Student assistant, Interpretation Section

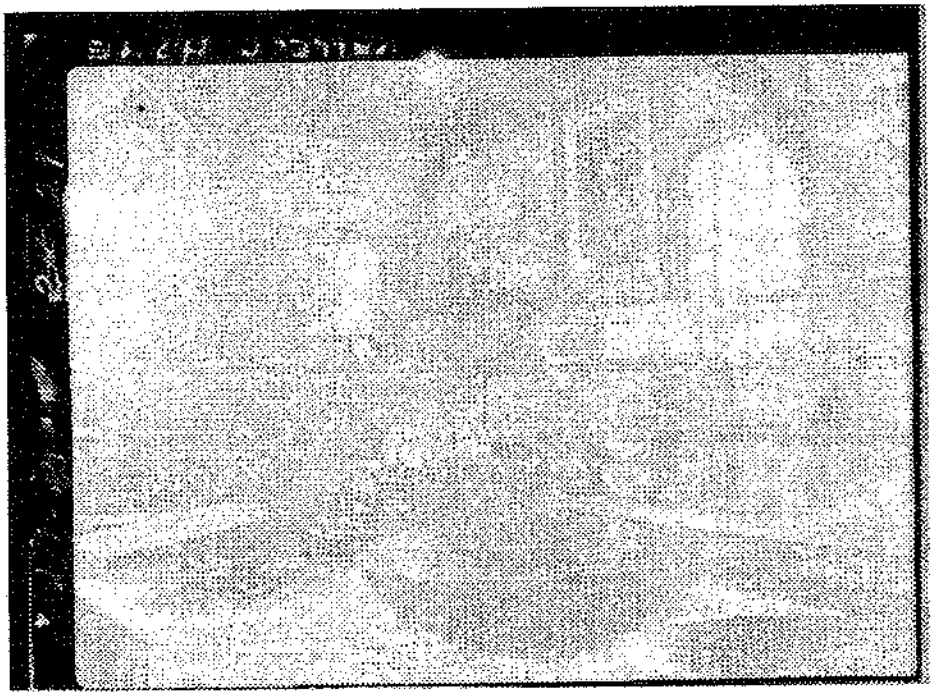
As a student assistant with the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Interpretation Section, my primary responsibilities involve researching park history, cataloguing photos of the parks, and scanning the images into the image database. My first "real" park—the park that I cut my teeth on—was San Juan Bautista State Historic Park. I learned a great deal from this experience.

One particular area that represented a challenge was the scanning of the images. At the Photographic Archives, we have scanned primarily from the photo negatives—the source containing the most "information" on a particular image. While the negative does contain the most information, and is the "primary source" for the image, I found that it was not always the best source for scanning purposes.

Negative scanning technology has several limitations, including:

1. an inability to keep the colors true when capturing images from color negatives;
2. the small nature of the 35mm negatives prevents us from properly capturing the full information present in the negatives;
3. we have prints, in black and white as well as color format, without negatives;
4. copy negatives made from prints lose information, making them less useful sources for scanning.

These limitations effectively prevented us from including all of our "photographic sources" on a particular park.

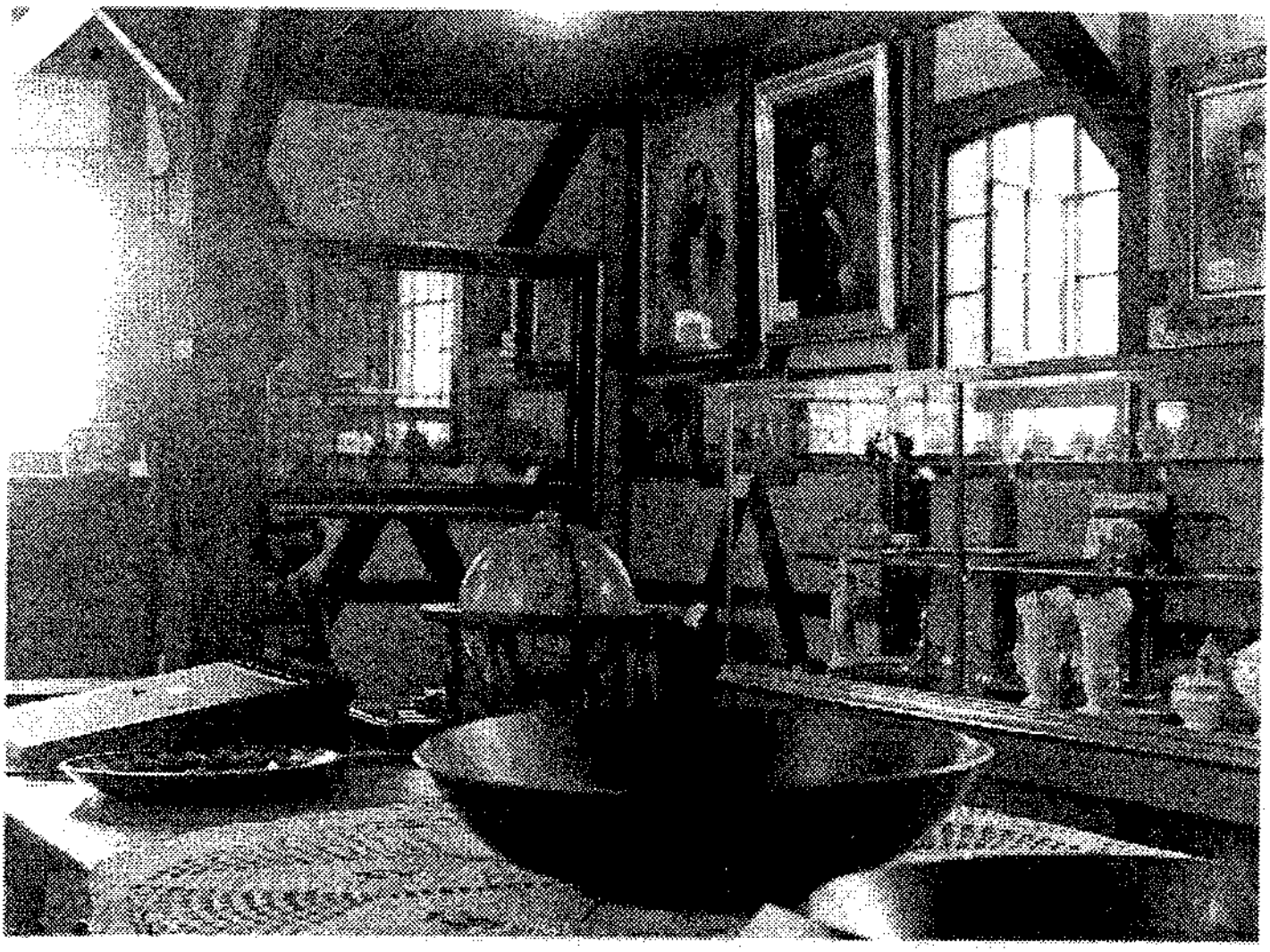


This image was scanned directly from a "dense" negative. It does not properly capture the full information present in the negative.

An additional problem presented by negative scanning technology is the capturing of images from "dense" negatives. When a negative tends to be more "dense"—containing more information and as a result, being "darker"—it tends to scan poorly, leaving a light, washed out image for the database. From my experience in black and white developing work, and in learning new developing techniques with Bob Young, Senior Photographer at the Photographic Archives, I knew that these "dense" negatives were capable of producing the best positive images.

When developing a "dense" negative, one must expose the photographic paper for a longer period of time, ensuring that the light passing through the negative has sufficient time to burn the image into the paper. When developing a print from a negative, we can adjust the contrast and intensity of a negative and image before it is recorded on the paper to insure the best image possible.

With a scanner, however, the initial intensity of the light passed through the negative, as well as the exposure time, remain constant. We can only adjust the intensity and contrast of an image *after* it has been captured, or recorded, by the scan-



Here's the same image scanned from a print (or positive) made from the same "dense" negative. The image is an interior shot of the Chalet in Sonoma SHP shot by Ed Dolder in 1946. It is just one of the thousands of images currently being cataloged.

ner. In the case of "dense" negatives, I have found that scanning the *print* produced by a dense negative yields images that are of stunning quality.

We can also capture more information by scanning photographs produced from 35mm black and white negatives than from scanning the negatives themselves. Properly capturing the information from color negatives can be achieved by scanning the print as well. Scanners are unable to properly read and translate the colors from color negatives to a captured image. Furthermore, due to the changing and constantly evolving nature of the chemicals and processes in color negatives, the decade-to-decade differences in the negatives interferes with direct scanning. Therefore, in the case of color negatives, it is better to scan directly from the print.

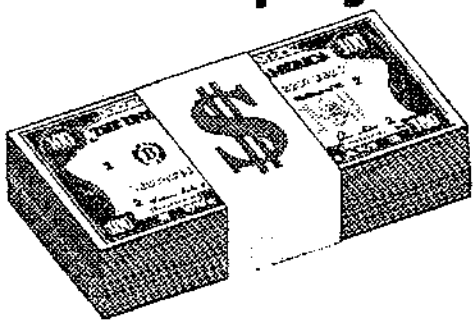
While scanning from a negative, in theory, captures the most "information" available in an image, practical application requires an altering of techniques. We have found that in the instances of dense negatives, color negatives, and 35mm negatives, scanning from the positive, or print, is the better option. Although in many instances, scanning from the negative is still the best choice, scanning from the positive (in the above-mentioned situations) allows us to retain the valuable information the image reveals about history and the State Park System.

Article Review:

"The Interpretation of Wages and Prices in Public Historical Displays"

by James C. Cooper and Karl Borden, in *Public Historian* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 1997).

Reviewed by James D. Newland, Historian SSC



For historians, the basic goal of the discipline is to identify what happened, why it happened, and to place these things within the context of their times. One of the most difficult tasks within the historical process is to wade through the bias of the sources and obtain an accurate, objective view of the event or times. The next, and often most daunting task is to then communicate that "historical interpretation" of the past to the audience.

Interpreters, on the other hand, are communicators by definition. In addition to their interpretive goals to engage and intrigue visitors, they also are tasked with the historians' goals of accuracy and context when relaying historical information.

James Cooper and Karl Borden's article on the "Interpretation of Wages and Prices in Public Historical Displays" brings to light both of these sets of goals. Cooper (Economics) and Borden (Business Administration), are both professors at the University of Nebraska. They each had several discouraging experiences in relation to the accuracy and context with which wage and price information was being presented at historic site interpretive displays. The authors then surveyed signs and displays at several other sites to attempt to gain an understanding of some of the common mistakes in the interpretation of this information.

Their article provides examples of some "horror stories" of wage and price interpretation, some explanation of how display designers often misinterpret and misrepresent data, some formulas and guidelines for converting and comparing wages and prices using consumer price, wage, and cost of living indices, and a set of six practical guidelines for interpreting this type of data.

Cooper and Borden point out effectively in their article that numbers alone do not represent relevant information. Without context, historic wage and price information can lead to poor interpretation. First, the raw numbers often lead to the false impression of the past as the "good ole days." Second, they are likely to not communicate any relevant information to which a visitor can relate, and third, they simply may convey inaccurate information and impressions.

As a historian, I personally have had to deal with similar cases of wage interpretation. In research on a turn-of-the century company mining town named Hedges in Imperial County, I came across the information as to the company's $3 a day miner's wage with a dollar paid back to the company for daily rent. Just relaying that "fact" may lead readers to several inaccurate conclusions about treatment of the workers or the value of their labor. However, if placed within the historical context that the average weekly wage for U.S. laborers in 1900 was $5 a week, it then indicates a skilled job wage for the time.

Cooper and Burden's article is a good tool for those having to deal with historical wage and price interpretive questions. As economists by profession, their focus is mainly on the process of converting old numbers to new relevant data. These skills may come in handy for us folks at Parks who deal specifically with similar information. In the bigger picture, their article reminds us of the importance of relaying relevant information to our audiences, and the need for historical context and accuracy in providing them with meaningful interpretive experiences.

If you would like a copy of this article, please contact Jim Newland at the Southern Service Center. (619) 220-5314, e-mail: JNEWLAND@PARKS.CA.GOV

Outdoor Display Cases Available

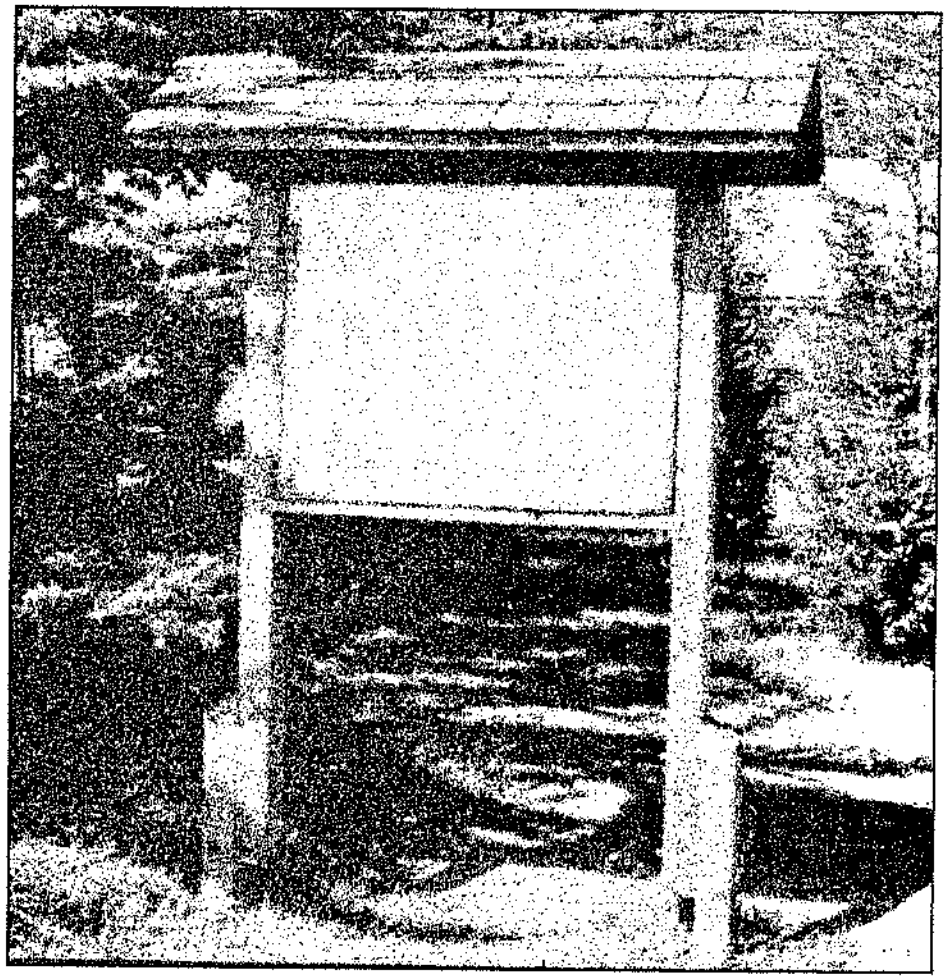
Do you need outdoor display cases? Did you know that you can order them ready-to-install from the Sonoma County Probation Camp? Ask your maintenance chief for a peek at their new catalog.

The catalog assures you that the cases are "built according to California State Park specifications." But, according to Exhibit Specialist Sharon Anne Mallory, don't just assume a standard size generic state park exhibit panel will fit into these cases! Their standard case is for a 30" x 30" panel and our standard generic panels are 32" x 40".

It is possible to custom-order them in the right size, or for that matter any size. Just call Ron, the production supervisor at (707)527-1108. The cost for a case that holds a 32" x 40" exhibit panel is currently $775.00.

Allow for flexibility in your time frame because they must have a minimum order of 10 cases (either statewide or by an individual district) to make it cost-effective for them to tool up for a production assembly line run.

Also, you must arrange for pickup at the camp in Forestville, (Sonoma County). They will load each case as three (3) separate parts: (A) the roof, (B) the case, (C) the legs and assembly materials consisting of nuts and bolts.

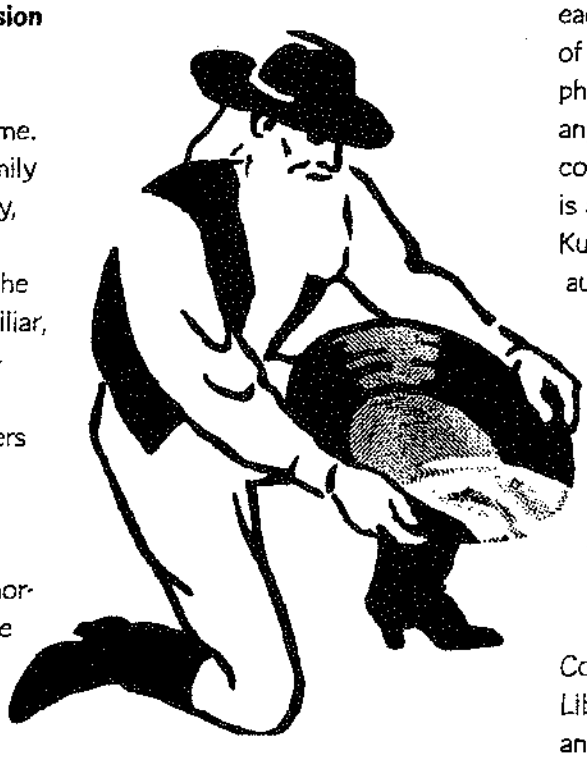


The catalog assures you that they are "built according to California State Park specifications." But, don't just assume a generic state park exhibit panel will fit into these cases!

New Bibliography

A Mother Lode of Gold Rush Literature

By Pat Morris
Museum Tech, Park Services Division



For many, the California Gold Rush was the adventure of a lifetime. Separated from the security of family and the conventions of community, the argonauts risked all on the chance to make their fortunes in the California gold fields. We are familiar, in part, with the drama and excitement of this colorful period in American history because the 49ers wrote letters to loved ones, kept diaries, and published books and articles. They wrote vividly, eloquently, and sometimes even humorously about their experiences. The gold they mined has been spent, but a rich legacy of Gold Rush literature remains.

For interpreters, historians, and others who have an interest in locating such eyewitness accounts, there is a new research tool available. The Book Club of California recently published *The California Gold Rush. A Descriptive Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets Covering the Years 1848-1953.* According to historian J.S. Holliday this work "...makes known, as never before, the extent, the magnitude of the literature of the California Gold Rush." Authored by Gary F. Kurutz, it is nearly 800 pages in length and contains descriptions of 707 individual works and a total of 1,126 editions.

The *Gold Rush Bibliography* includes published diaries, journals, reminiscences, collections of letters, guidebooks, sermons, reports of mining companies, early directories with narrative accounts, satirical works, fiction written as fact, and novels contemporaneous with the 1848-1853 period.

Here you will find listed the story of one Mrs. Bates who had three ships burn from beneath her on her journey to the gold fields. Also cited is the remarkable story of Joseph Heco who, although he spent most of his time in San Francisco, eventually published the only recorded account of a Japanese in Gold Rush California. And there is the fictitious story told as fact of Grovenor I. Layton, an upright young man who went so far astray in the gold fields that he eventually met his demise at the end of a rope.

The Bibliography features for each work a line-by-line transcription of its title, a detailed description of its physical characteristics, and a list of any maps, plates and illustrations contained in it. Each individual work is annotated. In these summaries, Kurutz traces the routes of the authors from point of origin through the gold fields, and describes their activities in the West. He often uses quotations to illuminate the character of the eyewitness observers and their reminiscences. He also notes the libraries where the publications can be found.

Gary Kurutz is Director of Special Collections at the California State Library and has written several books and numerous articles on topics relating to California history. He spent more than eight years searching for titles and writing the manuscript of his *Gold Rush Bibliography.*

The book may be purchased from The Book Club of California, 312 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California 94108, (415) 781-7532 or fax (415) 391-9603. The cost is $110.00 for members of The Book Club and $150.00 for non-members.

Copies of the Bibliography are available for viewing at the California State Library, California History Section, in Sacramento; the Park Services Division, Interpretation Section, Room 1449 of the Resources Building in Sacramento, and at the Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park library in Coloma.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS.

150 EXCHANGE.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS & THE SESQUICENTENNIAL.

EVERY PLACE, WHETHER ITS HISTORY IS MEASURED IN DECADES or centuries, has landmarks defining its special character. Fortunately, California has preserved many of its key sites within state parks. They embrace unique and representative examples of our natural and cultural heritage--places that have shaped national, as well as international, perceptions about California. Not incidentally, state parks preserve and interpret the critical era encompassing the transition from Mexican rule through the Gold Rush to statehood.

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THESE PIVOTAL EVENTS--California's Sesquicentennial--will be the focus of local, statewide, national, and worldwide interest. Throughout this period (1998 through 2000), California State Parks will provide some of the finest settings for promoting a better understanding of our past. Each park offers limitless possibilities for commemorating historic events, for promoting heritage tourism, and for demonstrating the significance and value of historic and environmental preservation.

THE PROGRAMS OFFERED IN STATE PARKS MAY BE A VISITOR'S first exposure to California's past and its natural history. For others, parks offer a validation of events and places read about in books or seen on television. These programs offer meaning and inspiration.

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PRODUCE SESQUICENTENNIAL programming without the cooperation--indeed the efforts--of California State Parks' field staff. The real work of the Sesquicentennial and its commemoration in California State Parks lies within each park's employees and volunteers. You have an opportunity to use this unique, three-year span of time to draw attention not only to the history and diverse environments of 150 years ago, but also to California State Parks' very important role in protecting our most valued cultural and natural resources.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

SESQUINCENTENNIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

HERE ARE A VARIETY OF WAYS TO INTEREST COMMUNITIES, teachers, students, newspapers, merchants, service organizations, and volunteers in California State Parks during the Sesquicentennial (several are now being used in parks):

☞EVENING TOURS. Provide a special opportunity for the public to see the park after-hours, using the magic of darkness and lamplight to help with the experience.

☞BOAT TOURS. Offer guided tours of local rivers, lakes, or bays on board a boat. Highlight inaccessible historic sites or hidden architectural gems not visible on shore.

☞ADOPT-A-BUILDING PROGRAM. Organize an Adopt-a-Building campaign for a state park structure. First determine the needs, then mobilize willing volunteers to solicit donations.

☞CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARKS. Is the nearby California Historical Landmark plaque missing? Work with local service organizations or other groups to replace lost plaques, correct misinformation, or relocate plaques to a more suitable place.

☞TRAVELING EXHIBITS. Share resources with one or more parks, museums, historical societies, or other organizations to produce a special sesquicentennial exhibit that can be moved to several sites. Provide space for a traveling exhibit that relates to the park.

☞SESQUICENTENNIAL WISH BOOK. Identify and organize the park's special sesquicentennial project and program needs into a publication that can be used for seeking donors.

☞SKILLS EXCHANGE. Do you have an employee or a docent with exceptional demonstration skills, or do you know of one in another park? Offer to trade employees for a special activity or event.

☞SPECIAL LECTURES. Work cooperatively with local colleges and universities to arrange one or more park lectures examining findings that may affect how a subject is interpreted.

California's Tapestry
A Section of *The Catalyst* Office of Community Involvement Issue #7 - Autumn '97

Thinking Like a Park Person

By Jack Shu

Many years ago social science educators realized that much of what they were teaching had a Euro-centric perspective. This did not imply that Euro-centric history is false or wrong, nor that it should not be taught. However, it was an important step towards knowing why history was being written and told in a certain way. Furthermore, it helped identify and bring in other perspectives on our past. Ultimately it enriched our knowledge of others and our ability to understand all of history. Most of all, it helped teachers find different ways to make social science relevant to everyone.

Like the term Euro-centric, the terms "park-centric" and "resource-centric" may be helpful if we wish to better understand and interpret existing park programs. Park-centric thinking is to see a situation, or problem from the perspective of what is best for the park. An issue outside of the park's boundaries is significant only if it affects the park. Similarly, resource-centric views place the resource in the center from which one looks out. History is told from the perspective of the resource and the future depends on what happens to the resource. These two terms may overlap or be used interchangeably. Park-centric and resource-centric thinking are emmeshed in the culture of park organizations.

It is important to note that park-centric and resource-centric perspectives are positive and valuable. They have resulted in the preservation of our parks and the protection of valuable resources. The public expects these perspectives in park polices and programs. Further, it may be our role to promote park-centric and resource-centric thinking.

So why do we need to differentiate these ways of thinking? First, because we need to understand and describe our perspectives. Second, because one of the tenets of interpretation is relevance and that may require exploring different perspectives. Third, because our role goes beyond being keepers of parks and saviors of resources. Examples of other perspectives may be: bioregional; community based; public health; and educational. These different ways to view issues, programs or polices seldom conflict with parks or resources. They more often than not support or enhance park and resource values.

Here are some practical examples of different perspectives. Rather than viewing the importance of a species in a park's environment, look at the contribution of that species to the region. What happens to the bioregion if the species is increased or decreased in numbers? How does this affect others in the region? It's moving from a park-centric to a region-centric perspective. This may be a simple example, but it legitimizes the need of the interpreter to think beyond park boundaries and makes the topic more relevant to everyone in the region. Another example might be a stream cleanup project, helping to restore a crucial resource and protect it from pollution, etc. Could this also be a public health project? What would happen if we focused on caring for communities and teaching ways to organize groups to improve environments at home? Success would be measured by more than a clean stream. Again, we begin with a resource-centric outlook and move to community-centric.

In both of these examples the park and resource increased in value and became more relevant, and that's **thinking like a park person**.

Submit articles and comments to: Jack K. Shu, Park Superintendent, OCI- Southern California, c/o Southern Service Center, 8885 Rio San Diego Drive, San Diego 92108, Ph# (619)220-5330

Catalyst Autumn 1997 Contents

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